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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000064

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: PM, OPPOSITION TRIPS TO DIYARBAKIR MOVE
THE DIALOGUE FORWARD

REF: A. ANKARA 39

[B](#). ANKARA 31

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Classified By: PolCouns Janice G Weiner, reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#). (C) Summary and comment: The tragic January 3 PKK bombing in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir, which prompted condolence visits to the city by PM Erdogan and opposition head Deniz Baykal as well as CHOD Buyukanit, provided a platform for Turkey's highest ranking politicians to hear ordinary Diyarbakir citizens' wants and needs, included what is needed to end terrorism. The irony is that it took a bombing. In addition to listening, they witnessed a modest widening of the window for comprehensive action to address the Kurdish problem and help finish off the PKK: locals, sick of the violence, want counter-terrorism and reform efforts to proceed simultaneously. Now it's up to Erdogan. End summary and comment.

Paying Condolences, Listening to Locals

[2](#). (SBU) Immediately following the January 3 Diyarbakir terrorist bombing which killed six and injured scores, Turkey's leaders headed east to express condolences. PM Erdogan, in Diyarbakir January 5 with a group of ministers and MPs, including Justice and Development Party (AKP) Diyarbakir MP Ihsan Arslan and former Interior Minister and Diyarbakir native Abdulkadir Aksu, met with NGOs, shopkeepers, paid condolence calls, visited those recuperating in hospital and went to the scene of the crime. Main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal, accompanied by former Diyarbakir CHP MP Mesut Deger, followed a similar schedule January 6. Chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Yasar Buyukanit, preceded them on January 4, as the worst hit was a bus carrying soldiers.

[3](#). (SBU) Seeing the young people who were wounded or paying condolence calls on families who had lost students was a reminder of the toll terrorism could take: Abdulkadir Ates described one victim -- a 17-year old only child, who had earlier lost his father and had been at the top of his class at the science high school, the city's best.

[4](#). (C) According to Arslan and Deger, the atmosphere in

Diyarbakir has shifted. NGO leaders told both Erdogan and Baykal they were disgusted with the violence and condemned terrorism. They unanimously favored moving ahead with further democratization and economic reforms at the same time as the fight against terrorism continues. Baykal, Deger told us, listened, but remains wedded to eliminating terrorism before launching other measures. When Deger asked NGO leaders for their impressions of their two-hour meeting with Baykal, they asked that CHP review its policies and queried, ^jHGPM also referred to the Silvan dam/irrigation project, which can be finished in four to five years, creating as many as 250,000-500,000 new jobs. Erdogan spoke, too, of greater opportunities for education in Kurdish. Arslan believes the new director general of state-run TRT television is working on a project to devote one of its stations to broadcasting in Arabic and Kurdish. Some reforms, especially changes to the constitution that Arslan sees as key -- such as creating a Turkish citizenship "supra-identity" and accepting ethnic sub-identities -- will be controversial even within AKP but, Arslan maintained, the PM "has control."

A Shift in Attitude

16. (C) The bombing represented a huge mistake on the part of the PKK, Arslan said. Both the PKK and its associated Kurdish-nationalist Democratic Society Party (DTP) were

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losing support as a result. The fact that the perpetrators were apprehended, leaving no room for doubt in people's minds, was key. CHP's Deger echoed that, saying he had watched as a DTP MP came to pay condolences and was received with stony silence -- a distinct change in attitude and form of protest. On January 10, a group of 200 NGO and civil society representatives held a silent anti-PKK protest in Diyarbakir. Unprecedented, too, was the PKK leadership's apology, admitting their people were responsible but had not been under the leadership's control.

17. (C) In Arslan's view, more "out of control" PKK activity can be expected. The organization, he believes, feels cornered, under pressure from Turkey, the US and Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) president Barzani, whose anti-PKK actions Arslan said the GOT appreciates. Rapprochement between Ankara and Erbil, which Arslan termed inevitable, will place further pressure on the PKK.

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